

23 MAY 1999

Mahathir-unity

UNITY, KEY FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

A news analysis

By: Zulkefli Salleh

KUALA LUMPUR, May 23 (Bernama) -- Be moderate and preserve unity -- that is Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's main message to Malaysians he addressed at the various meet-the-people sessions during his current tour of the states.

Upon recovery from lung infection that afflicted him after returning from performing the Haj, the prime minister relentlessly dwelled on the familiar subject of moderation and preserving unity when he addressed the people in Selangor, Sabah and most recently, Johor.

The subject may be a hackneyed, let alone an entertaining one, yet thousands of people came to listen to his unrhetoric and straight forward speech on a seemingly trite subject.

Dr Mahathir purposely sings an old tune against the backdrop of changing culture especially among young Malaysians who are taking unity for granted and losing sight of its significance, opting for street demonstrations and resorting to violence to further a political cause.

At last Thursday's state dinner in Johor Baharu in conjunction with his two-day visit to Johor, Dr Mahathir stressed that unity among multi-racial Malaysians based on moderation formed the very basis of the country's success formula.

The formula which the Barisan Nasional government applied since Independence played a pivotal role in Malaysia's progress, he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that the country would not have enjoyed economic progress, the way it did, without social and political stability, which in turn would not be possible if not for the moderation practised by all the races.

"Moderation has always been the key to Malaysia's advancement. Therefore let's maintain moderation," he said earnestly.

During his visit to Selangor the week before, Dr Mahathir told a media conference that attempts by opposition parties to replace the BN formula of moderation and unity with other political approaches would cause disunity.

The DAP's attempt to revive the "Malaysian Malaysia" slogan of the sixties would not be acceptable to the Malays and would cause racial tension, he said.

He cautioned Malaysians of the danger of schemes by Malay-based opposition parties to replace the Malay political culture of moderation and tolerance among the younger generation with that of hatred towards political foes.

Dr Mahathir lamented that these quarters had gone to the extent of misinterpreting the Quran to suit and justify their political ends of sowing hatred through hurling abuses to gain mass support.

Dr Mahathir, during his visit to Johor, also reminded the people about the negative effects of holding street demonstrations.

Malaysia has enjoyed political stability since 1957 because the people knew how to practise democracy and use the system for their own good, he said.

"There are countries where democracy brings more harm than good because when one side wins an election, the other side will hold demonstration and go on strike," he said.

Malaysia is expected to hold by June 2000, at the latest, its next general election which analysts said could turn out be the most intense yet.

The country has successfully tided over her worst economic crisis with one per cent economic growth expected for this year after suffering a contraction last year.

The next greatest challenge facing the country is to preserve unity in the wake of divisive political climate.

-- BERNAMA

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